



LOUISIANA SENATE

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SENATOR THOMPSON RECEIVES FINAL LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL ON KEY AGRICULTURE MEASURES

Next week, the Louisiana Legislature will adjourn its 2016 Regular Legislative Session. This year's session was a general session where legislators considered a wide-range of issues except for specific tax and revenue measures. With a \$600 million deficit, this made the already difficult task of adopting a balanced state budget especially daunting. And while the measures dealing with the state's operating budget and construction budget are not yet finalized, many important measures authored by District 34 State Senator Francis Thompson (D-Delhi) have received the legislature's stamp of approval.

"I am thankful for my colleagues' support of many of my bills dealing not only with important agricultural issues but also various other industries in our state," said Senator Thompson. Senator Thompson, as the chair of the Senate Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development Committee, carried many measures important to the agricultural industry. These measures have been sent to the Governor for his signature:

- Senate Bill 420 requires BESE, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, to develop and implement a farm to school program in Louisiana. The program will be designed to assist schools and school food service personnel in identifying and utilizing all available resources to support and increase the use of locally grown or raised agricultural products in school nutrition programs.
- Senate Bill 74 expands the Department of Agriculture's authority to adopt logos for products grown, manufactured and produced in Louisiana as well as agricultural related activities conducted in Louisiana. Such logos include the "Certified Louisiana," "Certified Cajun," and the "Certified Creole" logos that can be found on many products. The measure also establishes civil penalties for those who use the logo without prior approval from the department.
- Senate Bill 382 grants the commissioner of agriculture and forestry exclusive jurisdiction over all matters related to the regulation of seeds. The measure prohibits any local governmental entity from enacting ordinances or regulations that in any way affect the registration, distribution, sale or planting of seeds without approval from the commissioner.

In addition, the legislature passed other measures of special significance to a variety of industries in Louisiana at Senator Thompson's request. Those measures are:

- Senate Bill 419 requires professional services selection boards, which select architects and engineers to work on state projects, to consider the geographical proximity of the physical location of the office of an applicant to the physical location of the job or project when determining which applicant is best for each project.
- Senate Bill 421 creates a new licensure category for plumbers between the apprentice and journeyman levels – the tradesman plumber limited license. This new category of plumbers may only repair existing plumbing systems in one- and two- family dwellings.
- Senate Bill 238 establishes a process that the Department of Health and Hospitals must follow when they identify an immediate jeopardy violation while surveying a licensed nursing home.

As his measures have made it through the legislative process, Sen. Thompson says that he will be spending the final days of this legislative session keeping a close eye on budget negotiations and looking forward to the necessary battles to be fought in the coming second special session, which is set to begin only minutes after the legislature is scheduled to adjourn sine die for the regular session.

“As the budget discussions continue in the final days of this session and continue on through the next special session, it is imperative that we make sure that vital health services are maintained and that are colleges and universities are able to properly serve our students,” said Sen. Thompson. “I look forward to continuing to work with all of my colleagues and constituents to better the community and livelihood of our people.”

The 2016 Regular Session is set to end by 6:00 p.m. on Monday, June 6th. The 2nd 2016 Extraordinary Session will begin at 6:30 p.m. that same day as per Governor Edward's call.

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